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**THE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY UNDER PRESIDENT
CLINTON: ISOLATIONIST OR GLOBALIST?**

This paper is an attempt to present an interpretative assessment of the United States foreign policy under the Clinton administration. The main objective is to examine the implications of the momentous global changes on the shaping of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, and to identify the new U.S. foreign policy and security concerns and interests. Attempt will also be made to explore how these are affecting some of the important regions of the world.

The analysis presented in the paper is based on one basic assumption: that the fluid state of the post-Cold War international order, coupled with the pressing American domestic demand for change, has greatly contributed to Clinton administration's difficulty in charting a clear-cut foreign policy framework. The paper is developed along two broad aspects, namely, the role that the U.S. government seems to be envisaging for itself to play in the vastly transformed world, and the blurry contours of American foreign policy concept and practice that are discernible.

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I. POST-COLD WAR WORLD: WHAT ROLE FOR CLINTON'S AMERICA?

At the outset, it is appropriate to attempt a brief account of what has transformed the post-war world beyond redemption, with a view to appreciating the U.S. position which it finds itself in, to assessing the challenges and opportunities that the United States is confronting, and to understanding the debates that are generating around what role should America play in a radically changed world.

The end of the Cold War

The process of change in international politics began with Mikhail Gorbachev's 'new thinking', which essentially meant dropping of "class approach" to international relations and de-ideologisation of foreign policy. This was aimed at creating a temper of peace throughout the world deemed essential by the then Soviet leadership to revitalise the declining Soviet system, and then successfully compete with the West as before. This change of attitude and policy in Moscow led to the gradual withdrawal of Soviet support to the Third World communist regimes and communist and other 'progressive' parties, precipitating their eventual fall from state power and diminution of clout in national politics, whatever the case may be. Welcomed as it was in the West, the Soviet new thinking led to considerable improvement in East-West relations which was marked by, inter alia, signing of several significant arms control agreements involving both strategic and conventional weapons.

More importantly, the change initiated in the East, that was well responded to in the West, had a snowball effect. As Gorbachev's strategic vision had diluted the Brezhnev Doctrine, the East European socialist countries felt emboldened to follow what had been termed as the "Sinatra Doctrine"¹ This loosening of the Soviet grip over these countries and the

1. Gennady Gerasimov, once Gorbachev's spokesman, remarked in a press conference when asked about the Soviet attitude towards the growing independent attitude of the East European socialist countries that the latter would go their own way, paraphrasing the theme of a song sung by famous singer Frank Sinatra. This so-called doctrine, however, did not gain much of an international currency.

domestic groundswelling of popular discontent and sense of betrayal laid bare the hollowness of legitimacy of the communist regimes in these countries. These regimes tried and took some measures to reform the system but these were too little too late. People's power swept all these regimes away as they came tumbling down like dominos.

What had begun with Hungary's opening of its borders with Austria in 1989 and the breaching of the Berlin Wall in 1990, leading to German reunification, snowballed into a systemic transformation from a communist totalitarian system to a fragile market-oriented democratic political system. Then came the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991. All its fifteen constituent republics emerged as independent sovereign states, eleven of which have formed a fragile confederation called the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Boris Yeltsin's Russian Federation (shortly named Russia), by far the largest of the Republics, became the successor state to the former Soviet Union with its power reduced to the extent of having lost its superpower status. These sweeping changes have led to dissolution of the security alliance called the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and the economic grouping called the Comecon, essentially pulling down the iron curtain that had separated the East from the West ever since the end of the Second World War. So ended the Cold War.

In the face of such incredible developments in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, it is hard for the West to justify the functioning of the NATO in its original role and size unless new threats and their sources are identified and strategies devised to meet them. The post-Cold War NATO experience belies such a role. Concurrently, there have been other significant developments in Western Europe. The 12-member European Community (EC) has further moved along the road to economic integration and political cooperation by having signed the Maastricht Treaty which included commitment to a single European Common Market and a political union.

There took place significant developments in the developing parts of the world. Many communist regimes as well as authoritarian ones, such as in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, have been toppled. Democratic

elections have been held in communist countries like Cambodia and Angola. Democracy has returned after a long haul in Bangladesh, Nepal and in several other African and Latin American countries. Policy of economic liberalisation and privatisation is being adopted as a magic formula to heal all ills by many of these countries and by some other important countries like India and Pakistan. Apartheid in South Africa is on its way out. Iraq, a rising regional power in the Middle East, has been repeatedly humbled militarily and otherwise by the United States. The Arabs and Israelis are negotiating peace. There has been a wave of Islamic resurgence, that the West calls Islamic 'fundamentalism', especially in countries like Iran, Sudan, Algeria and Egypt. There has been an increase in the number of nuclear weapons states or aspirants, such as India, Pakistan, North Korea, Iran, etc. Thus there has been a sea change across the whole world. Some people characterise this moment in history and stage of human civilization as a massive shift in the "historic tectonics".²

Indeed the world is at a crossroads as the philosophy, principles and norms that guide a human civilization suddenly seem obsolete, while the human ingenuity is struggling to find moorings of a new beginning. After the First World War, world leaders were able to present the world with some guiding principles, although the Wilsonian world vision did not materialize. Again, the victors in World War II crafted an international system and set rules of the game that prevented for more than four decades a nuclear holocaust the world was capable of unleashing unto itself. The dramatic end of the Cold War sets the world on a course of transition, the trajectory and destination of which is unconceptualised and hence uncertain.

Challenges confronting the U.S. foreign policy

The post-Cold War global situation has thrown up a number of challenges to the United States. These are of political, security, and economic in nature.

2. See, for example, John Lewis Gaddis, "Tectonics, History and the End of the Cold War", *Occasional Paper*, the Merston Center of the Ohio State University, 1992, p. 4.

International relations today stand de-ideologised. The bipolar world order has given way to what one scholar has termed as "multipolar unipolarity."³ America's Cold War allies are now its competitors. The long-term nature of U.S. relationship with Germany and Japan, the two countries which are likely to soon sit on the U.N. Security Council, is enigmatic. As far as America's interests in Europe and East Asia are concerned, Russia still remains a great power with its own interests in both Europe and Asia. The world is experiencing a wave of political democratic change, as was mentioned earlier. The universality of the Western concept of human rights is now being labelled by many Third World countries as inappropriate to their non-Western realities and values. All these political changes have made the conduct of U.S. foreign policy a lot more complicated, as the international alignment pattern is to be fashioned on a premise that is new and still developing.

Clinton's America is also facing certain security challenges. Boris Yeltsin's Russia is far from stable. It is still a formidable military power with huge nuclear arsenal. Russia has not yet ratified the arms control agreements that were signed with the United States; nor have the Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan done so. China is also emerging as a formidable military power⁴ in the world as well as in the region. China's future relationship with Japan and the other neighbours may be a security concern to the United States. The rise in nuclear proliferation is a serious threat to the international peace and security. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism also seems to be engaging considerable Western concern as it is construed as anathema to the set of principles and values that underlie the present West-dominated civilisation. Broadly, the West seems to be seiged with the creeping concerns that the European civilisation is poised to face challenges from several other civilisations, especially the Islamic and Confucian.

3. The term is borrowed from Iftekharuzzaman, "International Security in the post-Cold War Era: Challenges Facing the United Nations," paper presented at a seminar organised by BIIS on 7 July 1993, Dhaka.

4. Dennis Healey, an elder politician in the U. K. had once remarked that the twentyfirst century belonged to China. The author heard him so speak on British TV a couple of years ago.

George Weigel characterises such trends as the "unsecularisation of the world", while Samuel Huntington contends that in the post-Cold War world the fundamental source of conflict will be neither ideological nor economic: the clash of civilisations will dominate.⁵

The Western concern for international terrorism, although not entirely connected with the end of the Cold War, has now been accentuated. Also, the surge of militant ethnic nationalism is not only a threat to peace and security, but also a serious challenge to the Westphalian nation-state system in that the nation-states have for centuries been the principal units of international system and actors in global affairs. The Clinton administration is to pursue its foreign policy under such a welter of security concerns and threats.

Japan and Germany, which have emerged as economic giants, are America's economic competitors. In fact, the United States is losing out to them in terms of international competitiveness and bilateral trade. The concern for the U.S. is that economic strength relative to military might has risen as currency of power in the post-Cold War period. China is also fast growing into an economic powerhouse. As a matter of fact, the whole Asian-Pacific region is experiencing such an economic boom that much of the rest of the world's attention is focused on it. Given its interest in the region, America has high stakes in being a partner in such a boom. A challenge before the U.S. foreign policy, therefore, is how best to pursue it in order to maximise America's economic interests globally.

While the above are the external challenges to the U.S. foreign policy there are the domestic problems in America that greatly determine its intention and capability to influence the outside world. These domestic weaknesses are debt, deficit, and social decay. The U.S. national debt had quadrupled in the Reagan-Bush years, to more than \$ 4 trillion. Savings and loans lay in ruin. Banks were wobbling under backlogs of bad debt. Real estate values crumbled. Corporations shored up profits by "downsizing,"

5. See for details on the theme, Samuel P. Huntington, "Unsecularisation, A Fact of life", *Dialogue*, Dhaka, 25 June 1993, P. 3.

which sounded nicer than letting people go; blue and white-collar jobs were disappearing. One American in 10 was on food stamps, one in eight living in poverty; unemployment had touched one family in four. For those who were working, household incomes were stuck where they were in the early 1970s. There was a fear that their future was at hazard and the nation was in decline.⁶

President Clinton has entered the White House at a time when his countrymen are profoundly weary of economic hard times, and less interested in the country's global commitments than previously. Therefore, for the United States to act as the world's only superpower, it has to come to grips with the erosion of its economic strength. The challenge before the Clinton administration is how to strike a balance between the efforts to keep America's own house in order and those required to continue to play the global role befitting the lone superpower.

In search of a role for America

In a joint session of the U.S. Congress on 19 September 1990 President George Bush coined the phrase "new world order" to connote a new era free from threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony.⁷ It was a master rhetoric which was aimed at rallying a response to Iraqi aggression against Kuwait on 2 August 1990 from the U.S. Congress, the allies, the rapidly weakening Soviet Union, China which had stood puzzled by the pace of world events, and the heterogeneous Third World. Bush scored a brilliant success in rolling back the Iraqi aggression and humbling the proud Saddam Hussein to his knees. The Gulf war victory had vindicated the second and better part of Bush's new world order concept that emphasized the need for continuing American leadership to prevent global

6. See for details, *Newsweek*, 16 November 1992, *Time*, 16 November 1992, *Time*, 21 September 1992.

7. *Kessings Record of World Events*, Vol. 36, No. 9. September 1990, pp. 37696.

instability.⁸ This was understood by some scholars as the unipolar moment when America had the responsibility to structure the new world order.⁹ This was, in turn, criticised by some other scholars and analysts¹⁰ on the ground that it was an American attempt to evolve itself into the only hegemonic power which would intervene unchallenged in the post Cold War world and that the concept of a unipolar moment is little more than a mirage that will soon vanish."

As a matter of fact, if we refer to the new world order as the global structure of power and authority in the aftermath of the cold war, the new order is either unipolar or multipolar meaning the United States, Europe and Japan.¹¹ Such reference makes the position of the Third World anomalous.¹² If we assume that the new order implies the triumph of capitalism and democracy, we shall have ignored the other realities like persistence of communist and authoritarian regimes in some countries of the world. Again, if we take the end of Cold War as a period heralding the beginning of an end to bloody international conflicts and the dawn of cooperative efforts towards a more equitable world, the earlier exposition in the paper does not quite make us as optimistic.

8. *Ibid.* Later in his State of the Union Message on 29 January 1991 Bush said, "... today in a rapidly changing world, American leadership is indispensable. We are the nation that can shape the future".

9. One such strong advocate of unipolarity is Charles Krauthammer. See his, "The Unipolar Moment", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1990-91, pp. 23-33. See for conceptual understanding of the new world order' Allen Lynch, *The Cold War is Over Again*, Boulder, Colo, Westview press, 1992; Henry Brandon (ed.) *In Search of a New World Order: The Future of U.S. -European Relations*, Washington, D.C. The Brookings Institution, 1992; Janna Thompson, *Justice and World Order*, London, Routledge, 1992.

10. For details see, Ted G. Carpenter, "The New World Disorder", *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1991, p. 29; J. K. Galbraith, "New World Order, *Mainstream*, 20 April, 1991; C. Rajamohan, "The New World Order: Myth of American Hegemony", *The Times of India*, 18 March 1991; Jasjit Singh, "Towards a New International Order", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 14, No. 7, October 1991; P. S. Jayaramu, "New World Order, Non-Alignment Movement and India", *India Quarterly*, New Delhi, Vol. XLVIII, Nos. 1 and 2, January-June 1992, pp. 23-29

11. See Richard Falk, "In Search of a New World Model", *Current History*, Vol. 92, No. 573, April 1993, p. 147.

12. This point is elaborated by Deepa Ollapally in, "The South Looks North: The Third World in the New World Order", *ibid.*, p. 175.

On the other hand, the end of the cold war has engendered some policy prescriptions for and observation on the U.S. foreign policy. First, the realists,¹³ tend to argue that given the radical changes in the world, the U.S. foreign policy should not give prominence to the promotion of human rights and democracy but anchor itself to a concrete, non-ideological finite ideal of the national interest.¹⁴

The problem with those who reflexively invoke the national interest as a guide for foreign policy is that they ignore the global responsibility aspect of foreign policy of a superpower like the United States. The U.S. foreign policy should not be devoid of legalistic and moralistic consideration always and everywhere. National interest is, of course, primary but a world order without some concern for justice is just not worth the name. The American record of support for democracy and human rights during the Cold War remains controversial despite favourable arguments put up by Huntington and Kirkpatrick.¹⁵ With the end of the Cold War the United States is in a better position to promote democracy and human rights without being selective and interventionist.

13. The term realist usually implies several connotations (i) national interest should drive a nation's foreign policy; (ii) these interests are discernible and ranked by geopolitical criteria; (iii) morality and national interest are basically in tension and morality should not drive foreign policy; (iv) international politics is primarily a quest for power rather than for justice. For the classical realist viewpoint, see Edward Hallet Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis*, Harper and Row, New York, 1962; George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1951; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed., Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1985. For the tenets of neorealism, see Robert Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and its Critics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986.

14. See Irving Kristol, "Defining Our National Interest," *The National Interest*, Fall 1990, pp. 16-25; Alan Tonelson, "Interventionism Vs. Minding Our Own Business: Charting a New Course for American Foreign Policy," *Atlantic*, July 1991 pp. 35-54.

15. Samuel Huntington argued that American Power has served on balance to promote democracy in the Third World, See his, *The Promise of Disharmony*, Belknap Press, Cambridge, MA, 1981, pp. 240-259. Kirkpatrick writes that Reagan supported America's traditional friends as he thought it coincided with U.S. self interest and that Reagan argued that authoritarian regimes were intrinsically less oppressive and more amenable to democratic reform than communist regimes. See Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1982, pp. 23-59

That is precisely the likely danger that the proposition of the second school of thought seems to hold. These so-called pro-democracy internationalists tend to believe that promoting and maintaining democracy abroad will be vital national interests for the United States in the post Cold War era.¹⁶ Robert Kaufman, who modified this view, advocates "that the best practicable foreign policy approach [for the United States] for the Post-Cold War Era is ... Judeo-Christian Liberal Realism, in which geopolitics, the promotion of democracy, a Judeo-Christian conception of man and morality play major parts."¹⁷ While he shuns the utopian error in Kober's "Idealpolitik"¹⁸ and holds the view that American principles and self-interest will remain largely complementary and that the best practicable means to achieve his prescribed approach is a vigilant and prudent internationalism, he is perhaps right. But the fundamental problem is that Kaufman's thesis only too obviously smacks of religio-racialist undertone.

Some Americans strongly advocate a third retreat into isolationism for their country. As the country confronts severe domestic social and economic woes, Patrick Buchanan, who contested with President Bush in the Republican nomination race in 1991, has espoused that America should return home and take care of itself only.¹⁹ Some even tend to observe that "America is coming home", characterising Clinton's foreign policy as one of "creeping disengagement" from the rest of the world.²⁰ Essentially, this is not the case. It is true that Clinton's America cannot afford to follow a Kennedy style "pay any price, bear any burden" approach and that American

16. See Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny*, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C. 1991; Ben Wattenberg, *The First New Nation*, Free Press, New York. 1990; Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment", *op. cit.*

17. Robert G. Kaufman, "Democracy, Morality and the National Interest," *Strategic Review*, United States Strategic Institute, Spring 1992, Washington, D.C. p. 32.

18. See Stanley Kober, "Idealpolitik," *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1990, pp. 3-25

19. See Patrick Buchanan, "America First - and Second, and Third", *The National Interest*, Spring 1990, pp. 77-82

20. For example, see Martin Walker, "America is coming home", *The Muslim*, Islamabad, 6 June 1993.

legions are withdrawing home, but it is also equally true that there are compelling reasons why the United States cannot afford to be isolationist in the post- Cold War era.

First, the lesson from the twentieth century history is not a quite happy one. Despite its largely isolationist attitude and policy, America could not remain uninvolved in the two World Wars and other important events that took place in the first four decades of the century, because the U.S. interests were involved.

Second, no U.S. administration can ignore the geopolitical imperatives when determining America's role in the world. It is a proven geopolitical logic that the United States cannot feel secure if a single power or a group of powers come to dominate the Eurasian mainland. Even though the world stands transformed with the end of ideological rivalry and other developments, one thing has not changed: the rich and the powerful will always try to dominate over the poorer and the less powerful. One should not, therefore, necessarily expect relations among major powers to be always good as some scholars tend to believe when they contend that all is going to be well in the "core" and bad in the "periphery."²¹ As a matter of fact, great powers will differ in interest and perception,²² necessitating the United States to be on guards to prevent any hostile powers from doing anything prejudicial to American security interests and values. Similarly, the U.S. interests in the Middle East and Latin America continue to be as vital as before. Any aggression in these parts of the world is fraught with dangers of imperiling America's pursuit of her other global concerns. Isolationism is, therefore, not a serious policy prescription for Clinton's United States.

21. See James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, "A tale of two worlds: core and periphery in the post-cold war era," *International Organization*, Spring 1992, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 467-491

22. See for convincing arguments, Adam Roberts, "The United Nations and International Security," *Survival*, IISS Quarterly, London, Summer 1993, Vol. 35, No. 2, p. 12.

Third, meeting the other security challenges, that have been illustrated earlier, requires U.S. power and involvement. America, therefore, just cannot afford the luxury of being impervious to these challenges and retreat home and busy itself with its own domestic perestroika.

Fourth, part of the solution of America's domestic problems lie beyond its shores. On the one hand, the United States, in order to redress its trade imbalance, has to deal with Japan, China and India; in order to tackle the problem of farm subsidies, it has to deal with the EC; and for the sake of saving and creating jobs in America, the Clinton administration just cannot afford to snap trade relations with such countries as China. The wave of economic liberalisation and privatisation in Eastern Europe, in the former Soviet Union, and in many Third World countries, offers Clinton's America with opportunities to trade and invest which would also create jobs in the United States. All this calls for globally activist U.S. role.

Fifth, the United States is a country that involves itself in the world not only for its obvious interests and concerns but also for the promotion of its values and ideas, such as democracy, freedom, liberty and human rights. As a matter of fact, at times these derivative interests are promoted to the category of intrinsic interests of the United States in the world. In any case, isolationism does not serve the purpose.

Therefore, Clinton's America is going to remain globalist both in role-perception and role-playing. Its engagement and commitment is certain to remain global, the size being dependent on its capability and need. After all, the U.S. capability, interests and concerns are global. However, the U.S. global role may not be always as effective as it used to be, because the currencies of power are no longer solely military power but also economic might and, some even say, demographic strength. All these now go to determine the power position of a nation.²³

23. For details on redefinition of power position and currencies of power, see William Pfaff, "Redefining World Power," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1, Winter 1990-91. Stanley Hoffman, "A New World and its Troubles," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 4, Fall 1990.

The difficulty President Bill Clinton is facing in charting a foreign policy course for his administration emanates from both objective and subjective factors, the former being the transitional and diffused global power structure and an economically weaker United States that Clinton has inherited, while the latter being Clinton's and his foreign policy team's apparent lack of a conceptualised worldview and their seeming lack of tactfulness and resoluteness in carrying out a superpower's responsibility in ensuring global peace and security. This also explains why one cannot categorically say whether the United States is in a position to a unilateral imposition on any state or a group of states, or it has adopted a multilateralist approach even in situations which merit immediate and effective military intervention that only America is capable of doing as yet. As a matter of fact, President Clinton does not seem to have a comprehensive foreign policy framework with well-articulated principles, objectives, and strategies and instruments. Nevertheless, the paper will now attempt to briefly examine whatever outlines are discernible from the so-called three pillars of Clinton's foreign policy.

II. PRESIDENT CLINTON'S FOREIGN POLICY

The three pillars of U.S. foreign policy as enunciated by President Bill Clinton, and later elaborated by his Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, are (a) strengthening U.S. economy, (b) safeguarding American security, and (c) promotion of democracy and democratic norms, including respect for human rights.²⁴

Strengthening U.S. economy

Bill Clinton was elected President on a domestic agenda, which is basically the promise and hope to regenerate the U.S. economy to enhance American prosperity. Most of his administration's efforts are geared to achieving that objective.

24. *The Economist*. London, 10 April 1993.

Here, we are concerned with the U.S. economic interests abroad and the policies that it pursues to serve them. Warren Christopher has said that his country would give priority to ensuring "open and fair trade and the expansion of new markets."²⁵ In order to ensure these economic objectives, the United States is engaging in bilateral and multilateral dealings with various countries and regions as well as some international forums.

The U.S. economic problem with the EC involves mainly the agricultural subsidy that some of the EC countries pay to their farmers, resulting in the U.S. loss in its trade with the EC. The other problem is the growing protectionism of the EC that affects free access for American goods to the European market. This is not a new trans-Atlantic trade war, but the intensity and stakes are certainly much higher in the post-Cold War period. The United States at times resorts to pressure tactics to force the EC to come to a negotiated settlement on the vexing issues. Again, both are competing for trade and investment opportunities in the countries of Eastern Europe. All this is affecting the Euro-American relations in a period of deep economic recession.

The U.S. stakes in a stable Russia are very high. A successful transition to a stable market economy in Russia is full of opportunities for the United States. Russia is a vast potential market as well as a virgin land for investment. The United States is, of course, finding some competitors in the Western Europeans and the Japanese. The Americans are trying to outrun their competitors by the benefit of early initiatives and the favourable Russian attitude to their former enemies on the other side of the Atlantic. The irony is that the United States has often made some of its reluctant allies to write cheques against Boris Yeltsin of Russia for his reform programmes to succeed as well as for his political survival.²⁶ All this has affected many countries of the Third World as far as the aid flow is concerned.²⁷

25. *Ibid.*

16. For how Japan caved in under U.S. pressure, see *ibid.*, p. 29.

27. See for details, *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 18,19,30 June 1993.

The Asian Pacific is the fastest growing region of the world. The U.S. economic objectives in the region are to redress its trade imbalance with Japan and China and to be a co-partner in regional prosperity. The U.S. trade deficit with Japan, the second largest economy in the world, runs into billions of dollars. This is due mainly to two reasons; First, the Japanese market is too protectionist for U.S. goods to have free access to, and the Japanese tend to prefer Japanese goods to foreign made ones while the Americans prefer Japanese cars. Second, the United States is relatively less competitive than Japan in each other's markets. The result is a huge U.S. trade deficit with Japan.

Japan's huge trade surplus with America is not necessarily good for the former in the long run, because the latter still remains by far the largest economy and market in the world. Persistent U.S. recession and the U.S.-Japanese trade imbalance may fatally destabilise the global economy, spelling uncertainties not only for Japan but for the whole region. The global economy is indeed interdependent. Robert O'Neill has put it succinctly while writing that "restoring the U.S. economy to full health is a priority for the global system. Without that, economic growth in East Asia will falter, and recovery in Western Europe will take that much longer."²⁸ The United States and Japan, therefore, signed an economic deal in Tokyo during the G-7 summit meeting early in July 1993. Japan agreed to promote growth led by domestic demand, increase market access, and stimulate imports and services. The United States, in turn, agreed to reduce its budget-deficit, promote domestic savings and strengthen international competitiveness.²⁹ However, the deal did not include any numerical target for cutting Japan's surplus of nearly \$ 120 billion in goods and services. The trade war between the two countries has by no means been averted. Rather, it is likely to be accentuated by their economic competition in the whole region. On the other hand, the European members of the G-7 have been annoyed by President Clinton for making a separate deal with Japan.

28. *Newsweek*, 24 May 1993.

39. *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 12 July 1993.

The end of the Cold War confronts the United States with the need to reexamine its policies towards China. The Chinese leadership looks increasingly confident that the end of bipolarity is a favourable opportunity to promote China's interests. Indeed, China is emerging as a very powerful state, both militarily and economically. The United States policy towards China should, therefore, take these factors into account. Basically, there are three elements in Sino-American relations: strategic, economic, and human rights.

Over the last few years, China has recorded an unprecedented rate of economic growth, nearly 14 percent. China's economic reform policies led to a rapid expansion of Sino-American trade - from \$ 5.4 billion in 1981 to \$ 20 billion in 1990 - and to American investment in China's booming economy that totaled \$ 4.4 billion by 1990.³⁰ The United States is China's third most important trading partner after Hongkong and Japan. America is the major foreign market for the textiles, toys, footwear, and light industrial products of China's coastal provinces. The trade balance is in favour of China. As China is fast liberalising its economy, the U.S. economic stakes in the most populous country are rather high. But there is a snag in this relationship: violation of human rights in China. The Tiananmen Square incidents have disillusioned many Americans who are calling for downgrading Sino-American relations. Bill Clinton also, in his campaign speeches, had rebuked the Chinese for human rights violations and pledged that he would not renew the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to China if elected. But as the stakes are high, President Clinton has extended China's MFN status for a year making next year's MFN renewal conditional on its human rights record in the intervening period.³¹ Clinton has, thus, bought time for both Washington and Peking. He also calmed others in Asia who feared a dramatic worsening of US-China ties.

30. See Steven I. Levine, "China and America: The Resilient Relationship," *Current History*, Vol. 91, No. 566, September 1992, p. 242

31. See for details, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 10 June 1993.

States. President Clinton mobilised all the other four great powers possessing nuclear weapons to desist North Korea from going nuclear, which would destabilise the security order in the region. President Clinton, who paid a visit to South Korea after the G-7 Tokyo summit in July this year, even went to the extent of threatening that if North Korea developed and used a nuclear weapon, the United States would retaliate immediately and with overwhelming force.³⁸ North Korea caved in under concerted pressure and agreed to allow IAEA inspection of nuclear sites and withdrew the threat to quit the NPT. China's transfer of arms and technology to Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and some other countries is also an issue in Sino-American relations, although the U.S. is the top arms supplier to the Third World.³⁹

Clinton is also concerned about nuclear proliferation in Europe. He is urging Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan to hand over their nuclear weapons to Russia and ratify the START accord on long-range ballistic missiles and the NPT. The Ukrainian leadership, which accuses the U.S. of its strong tilt towards Russia, is not willing to ratify these without some form of security guarantee from the West.⁴⁰ The other two also do not seem to be particularly keen to oblige the United States in this respect. Their relations with America are suffering due to this. The U.S. is also concerned over smuggling of technical know-how and the nuclear brain-drain from these states to other alleged nuclear aspirants such as Iran.

The Clinton administration is particularly sensitive about the nuclear issue in South Asia. This is one of the main reasons why the administration has created a new bureau in the State Department on South Asian Affairs. Robin L. Raphel, who was confirmed on 16 July 1993 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to be the first Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, had said before the Committee that one of the main

38. For details see *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 21 July 1993

39. This is according to a Congressional Study made public in July 1993, reported in *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 22 July 1993.

40. See, *Newsweek*, 24 May 1993, p 41; *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 11 July 1993.

challenges for the United States in South Asia is "checking the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery," and "first and foremost, this means persuading India and Pakistan to begin to roll back their nuclear programmes". Prior to this, John Malott, Interim Director and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of South Asian Affairs who was on a visit to India and Pakistan in June 1993, also had stated that the top U.S. priority in the region was to cap, reduce and finally eliminate from the region weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.⁴¹

In an attempt to force Pakistan not to go nuclear President Bush had suspended in 1990 a huge previously-committed military aid package to Islamabad. President Clinton is keenly following suit. He has also threatened sanction against China, which is alleged to be supplying M-11 long range (200 miles) missiles to Pakistan.⁴² Unlike in the past, India is also coming under heavy U.S. pressure for keeping the nuclear option open. America has even pressurised Russia to have shelved the rocket deal with India.⁴³ Washington had wanted the sale of rocket engines annulled because India could have used the technology to develop its ballistics industry in violation of the NPT. The nuclear issue is greatly straining U.S. relations with both India and Pakistan. The United States, however, seeks to address the underlying security concerns that drive the weapons programme in South Asia and to encourage direct high-level India-Pakistan discussion on regional security and non-proliferation. The Clinton administration could play a role in this regard, which the Bush Administration had tried with no success, only if India, like Pakistan, would agree to sit down with the Russians, Chinese and Americans to discuss the issues involved and hammer-out a mechanism of confidence and security-building measures between the sub-continental antagonists.

41. See M.C. Jaspersen's report. He is a USIA Staff writer. For details on U. S. concerns over the current nuclear situation in South Asia, see the text of a statement by Mitchell Reiss, who is a guest scholar of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, on nuclear non-proliferation and South Asia to the House Sub Committee on Asia and the Pacific, 28 April 1993, *USIS Report*, 5 May 1993, Washington, D.C.; *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 21 June 1993.

42. Reported in *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 22 July 1993.

43. Reported in *The Daily Star*, Dhaka 18 July 1993.

The U.S. security concerns in the Middle East are to guarantee an uninterrupted flow of oil to America and its allies, to maintain the status quo on political regimes (except Iran) in the region extending upto the Atlantic coast, to guarantee Israel's military preponderance in the region by not letting Iran, Iraq and Syria or any other to go nuclear and any of them or others to have conventional capability to upset the regional power balance, and to help bring an end to Arab-Israeli hostility. The U.S. has increased its armed presence in the Persian Gulf area and forged closer bilateral relations with some of the Gulf countries like Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. America has intensified its efforts towards Arab-Israeli settlement. The U.S.-influenced UN operations in Iraq are designed to dismantle its military machine including its nuclear programme so that it is never again capable of threatening the Arab neighbours and challenging Israel.

Iran, which is emerging as a regional power taking advantage of Iraq's plight and the 'brotherly' Muslim states extending upto China and the Indian Desert, is perceived to be pursuing a nuclear programme and a massive conventional buildup. Some members of the CIS, including Russia and Ukraine, and China and North Korea are believed to have contributed to such Iranian endeavours. This is a great concern to the United States⁴⁴ which is urging all concerned not to help Iran to proceed on with its regionally ambiguous military efforts. America is continuing its policy of isolating Iran, despite calls by some of the G-7 members at the above-mentioned Tokyo summit to rehabilitate Iran in the comity of nations. Iran is also believed by America to be the force that actually foments the much dreaded-in-the-West 'Islamic fundamentalism' and international terrorism in some of the Arab countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. These alleged remote-controlled activities are perceived by the U.S. to be aimed at destabilising the regimes which are supported by America.

44. See, *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 13, 17, February 1993; 10, 11, 23, March 1993; 16 May 1993; 11 June 1993; and 6 July 1993.

In order to effectively play a global role and serve its security interests, the United States must continue to maintain a strong military. But the force strength, quality and structure would depend on how to synchronise the unprecedented changes in the international environment with the radical cuts in the defence budget. This would also depend on how soon a strategy is crafted to replace the dead one called containment. Without this, the United States appears to have committed a military policy faux pas in Somalia where it once went in, came out, and then again went in apparently with no vision how to settle the raging armed conflict in this strategically important country in the Horn of Africa. Here, the U.S. leadership is facing a challenge as Italy, one of the most trusted allies of America, is threatening to pull out of Somalia following a controversy over a call to withdraw the Italian commander in Mogadishu. Earlier on, the Clinton administration also had sustained a blow to its global leadership when it failed to get through a UN Security Council resolution condemning Iraq, following unilateral U.S. missile attack on 27 June 1993 on Iraq's intelligence headquarters near Baghdad in retaliation for an alleged plot to assassinate former President George Bush while he was on a visit to Kuwait early this year.⁴⁵

Promoting democracy and human rights

The Clinton administration appears to be echoing the theme of Joseph Nye's book⁴⁶ that contradicts Paul Kennedy's decline thesis⁴⁷ and inspires his countrymen with the hope that America still has the power to lead the world, despite its apparent decline in traditional attributes of power like strong economy and military. The Harvard Professor contends that the real power of the United States lies in its embodying and championing a set of

45. See, *Dialogue*, Dhaka, 30 July 1993; *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 29 June 1993.

46. Joseph Nye, Jr, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books, New York, 1990.

47. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, New York, Random House, 1987.

universal values like democracy, respect for human rights, and free-market economic system that creates wealth necessary for leading a decent human life. Indeed, the US administration is tapping this intrinsic power of America to offer it to the countries of the world with a view to influencing them.

With regard to Russia, Clinton has said that democracy and economic reform must be fostered now in Russia, "not out of charity but because it is a wise investment ... promoting democracy in Russia is the greatest security challenge of our age".⁴⁸ In South Asia too, it is one of the U.S. objectives to help strengthen democratic institutions and human rights practices. In Angola the U.S. has recognised the elected Marxist government of President Dos Santos reflecting a shift away from supporting the Savimbi-led UNITA movement which had rejected the popular verdict. Clinton has also asked the Myanmar junta to release the pro-democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize Winner Aung San Suu Kyi. The role that the U.S. has played in restoring the democratically elected President of Haiti, Jean Aristide who was ousted from power in a coup by his military in 1991, may also be cited. While this is a laudable ideal and effort, America's foreign policy objective seems to be a bit controversial. The USA is using the issue of democracy and human rights as a foreign policy instrument, making improvement of relations with it and receipt of aid from it and from U.S. - controlled international financial institutions conditional on the performance of the concerned countries in that field. The case of China was cited earlier. Recently (July 1993), the ASEAN has rejected linking of aid and trade to human rights. Nigeria's President, General Ibrahim Babangida, is also facing concerted Western economic sanction for his controversial annulment of a reasonably fairly-held general election in his country a couple of months ago. While America is silent about the poor democratic and human rights record in some of the Arab and other countries, India and Pakistan feel uncomfortable when Washington appears concerned about the same in these two South Asian states. Again, America is shockingly silent over the genocide being perpetrated by the Serbs against the Muslims in Bosnia.

48. See *Time*, 12 April 1993.

As a matter of fact, there is a fundamental difference between Asia and the West on the definition of the very concept of human rights. While the values underlying the Asian concept are belief in the family, respect for the elders and societal norms, and a benevolent concern for others, the Western concept is based on individualism and unbridled consumption. In fact, it is a clash between cultures and values, which was much in evidence at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights held in June 1993, where China and Indonesia had led the Asian efforts to thwart Warren Christopher's, rather Western, insistence on a single worldwide concept of human rights. If not judiciously used, the Clinton administration's penchant for promoting democracy and human rights may, at times, end up in America's unwarranted interference in other's internal affairs, straining their bilateral relations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The post-Cold War world, which is no longer divided by opposing blocs and ideology, is a transitional international environment. The world order that obtains today is a little chaotic; it is neither unipolar with the United States as the sole superpower nor is it clearly and firmly multipolar with apparent centres of power diffused across the world. Apart from the uncertainties involved in dealing with this new world configuration of power, the United States also seems to be concerned about the dangers from nuclear proliferation, militant ethnic nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, violation of human rights, etc. In other words, in the changed situation threats to America may come from its potential geopolitical adversaries some of which are currently its allies, the breach of world peace, and the challenges to its values like democracy, human rights, etc.

These global changes and challenges are obviously impinging on the U.S. foreign policy under the Clinton administration. America's domestic situation is also greatly determining its foreign policy. The United States, which is still by far the mightiest military power on earth, is economically and socially weakening necessitating a considerable diversion of its efforts

and funds towards meeting these domestic imperatives. As a result, there has been a perceptible change in the order of U.S. national priorities, restoring the ailing U.S. economy to its full health being at the hub of all other concerns.

In the light of these challenges, the United States is to perceive its role in the world, identify its foreign policy objectives, and determine the foreign policy instruments to achieve them. As discussed earlier, given its interests and capabilities, the United States is going to remain globalist, may be with selective and reduced overseas presence. And while its foreign policy is geared mainly to serve its domestic economy, it is also serving the other U.S. global interests and concerns like maintaining relationship with the current allies, preventing the emergence of dominant powers(s) in Europe or in Asia, maintaining global peace and security especially through non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, etc. What the Clinton administration appears to be doing in order to address the above is that it is modernising the U.S. armed forces in accordance with the needs and resources, supplementing forward deployment and other bilateral arrangements with multilateral mechanism with the hope of tying down both allies and former and potential adversaries. But there seems to be a problem with Clinton's foreign policy as far as its task and conduct is concerned. He seems to be equating his country's foreign economic relations with its whole foreign policy. His difficulty in charting a clear-cut foreign policy framework is understandable, given the fluid state of world affairs and the dire straits of the U.S. economy. But the sooner his administration is able to visualise a world beyond the current transitory phase and to articulate a role for his country, the better it is for America's long-term interests.